

**DIVERGENT EVOLUTION OF LIFE-STYLES AND INSTITUTIONS: THE
NEED FOR SOCIALLY RESPONSIVE AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT**

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ABSTRACT

The management of air pollution has a long and complicated history in the UK. Over the centuries, the issues of concern have changed, as policy-makers have struggled to deal with the often contradictory needs of human health and life-styles within a context dictated by pre-existing conditions and institutions. As old problems are "solved", new ones emerge to replace them, resulting in legislation which must constantly react to unforeseen problems after they have become damaging.

Within the context of modern air quality management, the behaviour causing the pollution has shifted from one directed at economic gain in limited locations - manufacturing industry - to one aimed at increasing flexibility in individual life-styles through the use of ever cheaper and more available private transport. Recent policy for managing road transport derived air pollution however, still relies on the tried and tested approach of locally oriented economic incentives based on the promotion of methods originally developed in the Alkali Acts of the nineteenth century and the Clean Air Acts of the 1950s.

Using data from research into perceived utility derived from the use and ownership of the motorcar, the paper shows how the management systems for controlling pollution have now diverged from the social systems responsible for generating it. The paper concludes by suggesting the need for an approach to legislation that shifts the emphasis from the present sector-led reactive management to a more flexible and proactive approach capable of responding to issues as and when they occur.

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